

people who disengage and drop out of school and, conversely, increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and go on to higher education or get a job in the workforce.

Because of the importance of improving high school performance, NCLB requires secondary schools to meet reading and math targets for all of its students that are established by the State—just like all public schools. However, secondary schools must also meet State-established graduation rate targets in order to meet the requirements of the law. The law also authorizes the School Dropout Prevention Program whose purpose is to provide grants to States and school districts to assist in the dropout prevention and school re-entry activities.

As several national studies have found, a staggering number of youth fail to graduate on time. For example:

About one-third of our students—approximately 1.23 million each year—leave high school without a diploma.

Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to drop out of high school. In 2005, 6 percent of non-Hispanic whites ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school, compared with 11 percent of blacks and 23 percent of Hispanics.

A student's decision to drop out of school has long-term consequences that not only affect the individuals themselves, but the society at large:

Dropouts from the class of 2006 cost the nation more than \$309 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes.

If the nation's likely dropouts from the class of 2006 graduated, we could save more than \$17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured care over the course of those young people's lifetimes.

If high schools and colleges raise the graduation rates of Hispanic, African-American and Native American students to the levels of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than \$320 billion to the U.S. economy.

Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the U.S. by just 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost \$8 billion each year by reducing crime-related costs.

A high school diploma and further postsecondary education or training is critical in today's global economy. Dropouts are unlikely to have the minimum skills necessary to function in today's increasingly complex and technological workforce.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator that our nation's public schools are doing what they are intended to do: Enroll, engage and educate youth to be productive members of society.

However, there have been some concerns raised over the availability and quality of data on graduation and dropout rates and how they differ from State to State. This is based largely on whether the individual State has developed strong standards for its high schools. For example, even though NCLB has improved the reporting of data, a few States continue to have wide gaps in their data and can not accurately calculate graduation or dropout rates from 1993 to 2002.

To deal with this problem, yesterday, Secretary Spellings issued proposed federal regu-

lations to establish a uniform formula to calculate graduation rates. In particular, States would be required to adopt the formula, largely based on a rate agreed to by the National Governors Association, NGA, by 2012.

I agree with the Secretary that this must be done. Only by knowing how well or how poorly States, schools, and school districts are educating students can we ensure that every student receives an excellent education.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

### 30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 30-Something Working Group which the Speaker is a member of and I know will join us down here for an hour in the future, we hope to be joined later this evening by one of the senior members of the 30-Something Working Group, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK).

We come down to the House floor as some of the younger Members of the Democratic Caucus, and we try to do it every week to really focus in on how the issues affecting this Congress are specifically challenging younger families in this country. How the neglect of the past 12 years trying to be remedied by the new Democratic majority here are affecting those families that are just starting out, those issues maybe can be best talked about and best addressed by those of us who are the younger members of the House represented by the 30-Something Working Group.

We thank the Speaker for constituting the working group and allowing us to come down and share our thoughts.

It is remarkable as a first-term Member, Mr. Speaker, to see the transition of views and transformation of priorities and issues that you hear about as a first-term Member, going out and holding office hours as I do at supermarkets throughout my district, holding town hall meetings every week or 2 weeks throughout the district.

I remember back in February of 2007 when I held my first big, large town hall. It was a nerve-racking occasion as a first-term Member of Congress, and I remember thinking there was only one subject to hold that town hall meeting on, and that was the war in Iraq, dominating the conversation as it seemed to here on the floor of the House and in the halls of the United States Congress.

The President had proposed his new strategy to introduce 35,000 to 40,000 new troops into Iraq, clearly working against the will of the majority of the American people who had said all across this Nation in November 2006 that they wanted a new direction in Iraq.

And now fast forward a year later to town halls that I am holding, as well as other members of the 30-Something Working Group and Members on both sides of the aisle, and you hear a very different tune.

People are still talking about Iraq. The situation hasn't gotten any better, and you can make the very plausible argument that things have gotten worse in Iraq over the last year. Even as the surge has moved forward, the political willingness of the Iraqis to take control of their own country has moved backwards.

But what we are hearing very clearly from the mouths of our constituents in town hall meetings and office hours across this Nation is that there is economic trouble. There is trepidation on behalf of families throughout this country as to the economic future that they face as families and that our communities face going forward.

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And it's real. The numbers are getting worse. The amount of homes facing foreclosures, the number of workers being laid off, even those people who have jobs finding that the salary increases they thought were coming are being postponed, the amount of overtime hours that they used to rely on, cut back, many more part time workers, more temporary workers.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, whether we're in a recession or not. I'm not an economist. But I know that people are facing real trouble back in Connecticut, as they are throughout the rest of this country.

And I don't think it takes a rocket scientist on this floor or anywhere else in the country to figure out how we got here. You know, this isn't just about the jobs that are being lost. This isn't just about the themes are being foreclosed upon. This is about the fact that thousands of families, millions of families around this country and in the Fifth District of Connecticut have no more room in their budget to take any more hits.

Energy costs going up at a pace that families and seniors can't sustain; health care costs going up to the point where businesses celebrate when they hear that their premiums are only going to increase by 10 percent in a given year. You add that all together with an economic slowdown, and you put millions of families at risk throughout this country.

And it should be no surprise that we've gotten to the place that we are today because for 12 years, while our friends on the other side of the aisle controlled this House, while President Bush staked his claim to the White House, we have had absolute neglect when it comes to energy policy.

So the families throughout this country today are hurting, while oil companies are making record profits, record profits; not just for the oil industry, but for any company in the history of capitalism in this country, record profits for the oil companies, while we have